



New Wineskins

By Pastor Paul Rettew

We are a traditional church. This means that we are community that values our traditions – our worship style, our Presbyterian heritage and government, our ways of interacting with and caring for each other, our structures for getting things done, our historic building, and many other things. These things are precious and give us our sense of identity.

Some of us have been in this church since we were children; others for decades. It is a mainstay of our lives and we want to keep things as we know and cherish them. This is totally understandable.

Yet at the same time, we all realize that there is another side to the discussion – namely, how do we flourish as a church and fulfill our mission in the midst of a radically changing culture? Here is the essential question: How do we bring the gospel to this age? The gospel does not change, but the Church, in the ways that she presents the gospel, has always changed. New wineskins are needed for the new wine of the

gospel as it comes to expression in our time and place.

How do we maintain our cherished identity while developing new approaches to the challenges we face? These sorts of questions need to be asked - we all agree with this. But it is sure uncomfortable to ask them!

My calling, along with the Session, is to provide leadership in the following areas:

- First, helping our church to have a clear, biblical sense of our identity and purpose in accordance with the gospel.
- Second, helping us to evaluate our present condition in light of this understanding, with a willingness to cast off all that hinders us from knowing, living and doing the gospel.
- Third, creatively developing a Spirit-led vision of how we might further grow in our identity and better fulfill our mission.
- And finally, stepping forward to lead us into

new avenues of Kingdom life.

Our Lord has given us clear teaching in His Word regarding who we are blessed to be and what we are to be doing. Starting in July, I am inviting those of you who are desirous, to join me for a time of Visioning Prayer. There will be six gatherings, meeting late afternoon on Wednesdays, to reflect each time on a different area in the life of the church – those things that Jesus calls us to be and to do - areas such as being gospel-centered, living together as community, worship, mercy, outreach, etc. We will have a reading on the night's theme, raise questions in response, do some self-evaluation, and have open discussion together. And then, most importantly, we will pray together - crying out to our Lord to grant us a new vision for our church, and to do his wondrous work in and through us. The hope is that this group will be a spiritual catalyst, being used of our Lord to further

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Special points of interest:

- *There will be no Sanctuary Choir Rehearsals in July;*
- *The Handbells will resume rehearsals on Sunday, August 11.*
- *Information for the September Newsletter will be due on Monday, August 19.*

Music Notes

On the first Sunday in July, you will notice a change in our worship service. Our faithful church choir takes a well-deserved vacation for that month (though many of them will still be providing special music for one or more of the services). This would be a great time to thank them for their faithful service if you have the opportunity. I am extremely grateful for the abilities and the commitment of each member. They, along with our wonderful organist, Nancy Goodrich, make my role as music director a joy!

May I say that there is always room for more choir members? We could especially use sopranos and altos, though all parts are welcome. The beginning of

August would be a great time to join as we start up with new music after our vacation. If you can carry a tune and you feel a tug in your heart, why not ask the Lord if this is an avenue of service in which He would have you participate? If you're interested or have questions, please feel free to contact me—706-491-1330, shar.morden@gmail.com.

And now, for a couple music quotes on the lighter side. Perhaps they will make you smile.

"It's easy to play any musical instrument: all you have to do is touch the right key at the right time and the instrument will play itself." ~Johann Sebastian Bach

"A person who does not regard music as a marvelous creation of God, must be a clodhopper indeed and does not deserve to be called a human being; he should be permitted to hear nothing but the braying of asses and the grunting of hogs." ~Martin Luther

May you have a wonderful summer, basking in the grace of God!

Sharon

Mercy Ministry News

Special Offering

A total of \$ was collected to benefit Toccoa Life. Thank you for your generous giving.

Little League Concession Stands

The Mercy Ministry staffed the Little League Concession stands on Friday, May 3rd, donning our Toccoa Presbyterian Church t-shirts. This allowed mothers to watch the games as their children played and provided community exposure for TPC, as well. Thank you Barry Hodges, Gary Lance, Ed Morris, and Janice Parker for volunteering.

Special Olympics

The Mercy Ministry staffed an activity tent in Olympic Town on Friday, May 3rd for the athletes of the Stephens County Special Olympics. Thanks to the creativity and hard work of Bette Brantley items were available for colorful fish crafts to be made by approximately 45 athletes. This would not have been possible without the help of the following volunteers: Barry Hodges, Sally Hodges, Mona Keister, Gary Lance, Judy Lance,

Janice Parker, Jane Ann Quartel and Lane Tucker. Thank you.



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Mercy Ministry News continued

Highlight of the Month

Did you know that in Stephens County,

- In 2016*, 1,690/One-third of Stephens County Children were living in poverty. (29.9% in Stephens County; 23.1% in Georgia);
- In 2016*, 1,071 (38.1%) families with children had income less than 150 % of the poverty threshold;
- In 2016*, 882 crimes were committed by people age 17 or older (43.4 per 1000 in Stephens County; 27.3 per 1000 in Georgia);
- In 2016*, 68 children had a substantiated incident of abuse and/or neglect (11.9 per 1000 for Stephens County; 7.0 per 1000 for Georgia);
- In 2013*, 2505 households with children were receiving food stamps;
- In 2016*, 754 children (14.2%) had parents who lacked secure employment;

- In 2016*, teen births, ages 15 to 19 were 28 (or 33.1 per 1000 teens in Stephens County; 14.4 per 1000 in Georgia);
- In 2016*, teen pregnancies, ages 15 to 17, were 8 (or 17.1 per 1000 teens in Stephens County; 14.4 per 1000 in Georgia);
- In 2016*, 66 babies were born to mothers with less than 12 years of education;
- In 2016*, there were 25 ninth grade students who reported alcohol use in the last 30 days.

*Latest figures

Source: Stephens County Profile of Child, Family and Community Well-Being by Family Connection, Stephens County, January 2018.

Presbyterian Women News

On Saturday, May 18, the Presbyterian Women enjoyed a lovely luncheon tea and learned about the beginnings of our church, and particularly its women, through an interesting presentation by Jenny Bell. Our next luncheon will be held on August 10 at 11:30 a.m. Look for more information in future church bulletins as the date gets closer.

At the May 18 business meeting, the following officers of the Presbyterian Women's Council were elected by acclamation: President, Judy Lance; Vice President, Lynn Hotle; Secretary, Winona Harlow; Treasurer, Jane Ann Quartel; Bible Study Leader, Janice Parker; Member-at-large, Renee Corbett.

Fall Ladies' Bible Study

Our fall ladies' Bible study will be *The Daniel Prayer* by Anne Graham Lotz. Please contact Janice Parker to order a book. Phone: 678.923.9005; email: janiceparker@gmail.com. The evening study will begin on Tuesday, September 3 at 6:00 and the morning study on Wednesday, September 4 at 10:30. Groups will meet in the Parlor Classroom on the first and third Tuesday and Wednesday of each month.

SUMMER ACTIVITIES

Prayer Nights

All are held at 6:00 p.m. in the Parlor Classroom:
 June 27 – all are invited to participate
 July 25 – women's prayer time
 August 22 – all are invited to participate

Game Night

Our summer game night will be held Thursday, June 13 at 6:30. All are welcome. Bring your favorite game or just show up. Popcorn and drinks provided!

Craft Night

Come out for an evening of craft fun on Friday, August 2 at 6:30. This evening's activities will be making candle votives and decorating plates. Look for more information as the time gets closer. Be sure to sign up!

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Preaching the hope of Christ.

The Ministry of this church is to support God's family through mission, evangelism, worship, care, education, fellowship, and stewardship. You are invited to join the members and friends who serve and support the church in these areas. All persons are invited and encouraged to become active participants in God's Family.

We're on the Web!
www.toccoapresbyterianchurch.org

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the formation of a renewed sense of identity, vision, and purpose.

The group will work under the Session's authority and bring its ideas to the Session. The Session has already given its formal approval. After this first season of prayer, appointed leaders will then begin the second stage of developing a new, Spirit-led, biblically informed vision for our church.

The spirit and method for all this is to develop a group of like-minded people who will only gradually move - always sensitive to the congregation - bringing everyone along by helping them to see why we are doing things the way we are, and why it is better to do so, or good to at least try. In other words, we move into the new things collectively, maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. We do it as we together see that

there is a vital reason and a desirable

outcome that enables us to willingly let go of the old ways and joyfully and expectantly embrace the new in faith.

Jesus loves this church. He has given us a rich heritage and identity. His way forward is not to smash us and make us into something different; but to take us where we are and renew us and fill us with his empowering presence to lead us forward to the next generation. Let us seek HIM! Let us discover the things HE has for us!

Please let me know if you are interested in joining in this season of prayer. All enthusiastic, visionary types with a love for prayer and heart for Jesus and his Church, are encouraged to participate!